

present Office Action, the Examiner required that Applicants specifically state which limitations in these newly amended claims make them patentable over the previously applied references of Yoshikazu and Gradon (Applicants assume that the Examiner means the references of Japan 09234247 to Yoshikazu (referred to as Noda in the first Office Action), EP 0 885 623 to Gradon, and United States Patent No. 6,349,722 to Gradon).

Claim 33 specifies “wet heating means adapted to vaporise liquid water in said humidification chamber in order to provide water vapour to said gases flow passing through said humidification chamber and dry heating means adapted to directly heat said gases flow passing through said humidification chamber”. Applicants submit that none of the references, either alone or in combination, provide separate wet heating to provide humidification and dry heating means to directly heat the gas flow. There is no disclosure of how low relative humidity air could be generated in the cited references as proposed by the present invention. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 33, as amended, is novel and non-obvious over the prior art. Reconsideration and allowance of claim 33 is requested.

Each of claims 36-38, 41, 43 and 44 specify “a regulated conduit heater adapted to regulate the temperature profile of said gases flow along said conduit and/or of said conduit, to substantially coincide with a predetermined profile”. Each of the cited references disclose uniform heating within the conduit. Accordingly, in the cited references, there is no method to regulate the temperature profile of the gases flow along the conduit and/or of the conduit. By way of example, only the sections of temperature dependent resistance material proposed in one embodiment of the present invention provides a regulating function such that a more even temperature profile is achieved along the length of the conduit. This is an improvement over the prior art which would simply result in an increase in temperature along the length of the conduit, whereby the temperature profile would be affected by any local conditions.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 36-38, 41, 43 and 44, as amended, are novel and non-obvious over the prior art. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 36-38, 41, 43 and 44 is requested.

A Petition for a Two-Month Extension of Time is concurrently submitted herewith to extend the date for response up to and including September 15, 2004.

Should the Examiner have any questions regarding this Response, the Examiner is invited to contact one of the undersigned attorneys at (312) 704-1890.

Respectfully submitted,

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